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NASA increases clean-up efforts

2 wells to be added at **JPL** dump site

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LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE -- Since early this year, NASA has pumped water up from a contaminated plume beneath the **Jet Propulsion Laboratory**, removed about 400 pounds of perchlorate and more than eight pounds of other potentially hazardous chemicals and re-injected the water below ground.

Now NASA is proposing to expedite that clean-up process by adding an additional two wells - one for extraction and one for injection - to its **JPL** treatment plant. The estimated cost for the additions is $1 million.

Steve Slaten, remedial project manager for the NASA water cleanup project, said the source area is an eight to 10-acre site near the old disposal pits. "About two-thirds of all the chemicals that are in the groundwater still exist in this area in higher concentrations than off site," he said. "It's important that we capture these chemicals" so they don't spread to other areas.

Now that the feasibility study has shown that the treatment technology works well for its location, **Slaten** said NASA wants to expand its capabilities. And the agency is seeking public comment on its proposal, which is now online and will be available by Nov. 1 at local libraries.

This is all part of NASA's comprehensive clean-up of an area beneath **JPL** where -- between 1945 and 1960 -- employees dumped chemical waste into seepage pits.

The treatment process pulls water up from underground, puts the water through a carbon filter and a treatment tank where bacteria destroy any perchlorate, and then re-injects the water into the groundwater. Currently, there are two extraction wells and two injection wells on site.

Significant debate exists over the level of danger perchlorate poses to the public. The chemical can interfere with the thyroid's iodide uptake and thyroid hormone production. This is of most concern to pregnant women because the hormones are needed for pre and post-natal development.

Perchlorate has been measured at the **JPL** source area at concentrations of 13,000 parts per billion. Off-site, in areas affected by the plume, levels are generally about 1,000 times lower and still must be cleaned up. California's public health goal, which spells out a level of contamination that would pose no danger to even the most sensitive populations, is 6 parts per billion.

Slaten said to thoroughly clean that source area, the system will need to operate for "probably at least a decade."

NASA will hold a public meeting to hear comments on the expanded proposal from 7-9 p.m. on Nov. 16 at the Altadena Community Center, 730 E. Altadena Drive in Altadena.

The proposal is currently available online at http://**jpl**water.nasa.gov and will be available by Nov. 1 at the La Canada Flintridge Public Library, the Pasadena Central Library, the Altadena Public Library and the **JPL** Repository for **JPL** employees. Copies and additional information can be requested by calling (818) 393-0754.